

Reflection for the Memorial of St. Benedict

"We have given up everything and followed you. What will there be for us?"

Today we celebrate the memorial of St. Benedict, the founder of the Benedictine Order and the father of monasticism in the Western world. Benedict himself, was an Italian of noble birth and from an early age, was sent to the city of Rome to study the liberal sciences. While there, he saw how the city was corrupted by vice and sin, and in order to avoid falling into these evils, he renounced his wealth and heritage and decided to radically follow Christ by leading a life of virtue detached from worldly possessions. After abandoning the world, others gathered around St. Benedict and he authored a Rule for the daily lives of his followers that emphasized the virtues of obedience, stability, chastity, and poverty.

Like the Apostles in today's Gospel, St. Benedict gave up everything in order to follow Christ. Now, not all of us are called to live such a radical lifestyle. But Jesus does call us to take up our Cross, deny ourselves, and follow Him. In his Rule for monks, St. Benedict emphasizes the virtue of moderation in all things. For instance, he says that Monks should be moderate in what they eat, not eating too little so that they become weak and not eating too much and becoming gluttonous.

I think St. Benedict would encourage those of us who have not been called to such a radical monastic life, to practice moderation in our giving up the things of this world in order to follow Christ. I think he would primarily ask us to examine our lives and discern what those things are that keep us from following God, whether they be bad habits or material possessions. The greatest obstacle to our following Christ is, of course, sin which we should always desire to uproot from our lives. Once we know what these stumbling blocks are we should ask God for the grace to give them up as the Apostles and St. Benedict did with worldly possessions.

As we prepare to receive Our Lord in the Eucharist today, let us ask Him to pour out on us the same Spirit of detachment and moderation that filled the soul of St. Benedict, so that we, like the Apostles and St. Benedict, might inherit eternal life.